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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

It seems like Memorial Day was just a short time ago; and now the Fourth of July is rapidly approaching! Are the days getting shorter?

The new lawn I recently put in is starting to take hold. It’s amazing to finally seem some green where previously all I saw was sandy soil. I’ll probably have to so some spot re-seeding, but I expected that would occur. Now I have to plant a "ton" of plant bulbs that I recently received in the mail - about two months later than expected! And I still don’t have the pool opened yet! Every time I’ve almost finished draining the water from atop the pool cover, it rains again! Never fails! Maybe this weekend.

Not much going on in the technology world these days (other than the ups and downs of the "dot-coms" - boring). Microsoft got a brief reprieve by having its case sent to the Supreme Court. It will be interesting to see if that court will hear the case, or send it back down.

Until next time...

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VMEbus Graphics Card Progress

I don’t usually send messages this frequently to my mailing list but I thought recent events were worth a message.

After having done nothing on the VMEbus graphics card for about 6 months, I have put something of a burst of effort into it during the last week.

Although it is not yet finished, it is now functional, and I am in fact typing this message with a resolution of 800x600 pixels in true colour on my TT (via the card)! All of the designs that I made about a year ago have proved to work perfectly and everything has gone very smoothly so far.

There is still work to do, but the card has come a long way.

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Mario Becroft

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. What a crazy week it's been. Not in the computer world so much, but in my personal life. Work, as always, takes more time than I'd like it to.

I almost ended up stopping in and paying a visit to our publisher the other day. I had to call on a customer not too far from his residence and, if I hadn't been so pressed for time I would have stopped to check out the lawn that has taken so much of his time lately. <grin>

Anyway, things have been hectic and I can't see any reason to believe that they'll ease up any time soon. I guess it's just part and parcel of the times we live in. That realization doesn't make it any easer to cope with though. But it does help to know that I'm not the only one feeling the pinch. Statistics tell us that the majority of us work more than the "standard" forty hours per week these days.

Anthropologists estimate that it took our prehistoric ancestors about twenty hours to hunt and gather everything needed for the week. These days, it takes somewhere on the order of sixty hours to do the same. That's progress, I guess.

Speaking of progress, let's progress to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Bengy Collins posts this tidbit about the next version of MagiC:

"One of the largest and perhaps most interesting rumor that has been floating around is the upcoming network support in MagiC. Lately, we learned of the possibility of the so called "MagiCNet" being MiNTNet compatible, thus opening up a world of new internet software for MagiC users. Now we have confirmed it with inside information. Here are some of the juicy details:

MagiCNet (Or MagiXNet, as it is written to the screen upon bootup) is almost complete!

The package includes Device drivers, tools, test programs, and serial and midi drivers, ethernet and the programmers socket library. The mentioned 'ethernet' is the authors Pocket adapter project for which he's ported the software driver to both MiNTNET and MagiCNET. For you techies out there, they are source compatible with only a few #ifdef MINTNET in the sources because MagiC and MiNT kernels are completely different. LANCE, RIELB, DE600 and other drivers can be compiled fine, but have yet to be tested.

Already, MiNTNet versions of aMail and aFTP work great under the MiNTNet overlay. (Tests were done by using a 'fake' MiNT cookie under MagiC)

Now that compatibility with MiNTNet is at a high enough level, work is underway on a Dialer. The dialer will probably be pppd but with a modern GEM interface. A GEM port configuration utility is also planned.

One last point worth mentioning: Although more tests need to be carried out

before this can be officially confirmed, early tests suggest that MagiCNet actually runs faster then the 'real' MiNTNet!..

As more information is compiled it will be added to the MagiCNet page of MagiC Online. (Not yet online)"

Edward Baiz tells Bengy:

"Interesting. I can hardly wait to give this a try. Is it going to be commercial, shareware or what??? Nice to see this....."

Lonny Pursell jumps in and mirrors my own thoughts:

"Just curious how easy it is to set all this up? The one big problem with MiNTNet is the installation. With IFusion what is the benefit to running the MiNTNet version of Amail and Aftp? I though the Atack guys made an IConnect OVL??
That comment I don't get. There is not that many GEM only MiNTNet apps, so what you have is a lot of work that went into something that will allow magic users access to all the boring text based unix apps. Cool! :-)))

The very stuff most wish to avoid from what I gather.

I would bet a few might find this useful, but from what I've seen in the past here not that many. If someone needs some serious networking and wants to stay with magic, then I guess they can try this package. Hope it works as advertised."

Bengy tells Lonny:

"Exactly, he is making a very easy installation programs etc. I only received this info last night, and asked for more information, he was very vague..
But he did mention MagiC Users not wanting to type in ifconfig sl0 addr xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx dstaddr xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx mtu 150 link04 etc etc to configure a serial port :-)

On the mintnet versions of programs... Yep, he just told me that as an example of the compatibility and the fact that it is working already :)

The whole package will be freeware, so I think it's great. I think it will be important for:
MagiC pre-installed in new milans
new milans now have ethernet cards
drivers available for mintnet..."

Mike Bedford asks about using I-Connect:

"When I log-on using I-Connect everything seems to work ok. The modem display indicates that I've logged on (to Demon) as do the various noises from the modem :-).
The task bar gets to the end of the sequence and the program then freezes.

The following messages are displayed
Status Get IP addresses
Command Service-Eintrage (there's an umlaut over the last a)"

Steve Sweet tells Mike:

"Service Eintrage and Proxy Eintrage equate to Service entry and proxy

entry.

It’s the phase in the handshake where iConnect gets the IP numbers it craves. I suggest you run Con-Info and see if those IP no’s are granted. Check through iConf dialogues for obvious errors, like have you opted for a dynamic IP?."

Derryck Croker adds:

"Make sure that the running order of your HSModem components is correct. Sockets.prg should run immediately afterwards.

Service Entry.

I don’t know what entries you have in IConnect, but ISPs that I’ve set it up for recently have needed very little work.

In the Modem page set your port and modem init (atz here)
Account - your login, password, ISP tel number and 0.0.0.0 as IP address
Login - just a "Done" with the PPP box ticked
DNS IP address - again 0.0.0.0 (the ISP should pass this detail)

Fill out the other boxes to suit Demon’s details.

This should do it."

Lyndon Amsdon asks about RAM upgrades:

"I got this old marpet RAM upgrade board for an STFM. The STFM only had 512k and the marpet board had two 256k simms on the board in the two slots nearest the ribbon connectors to make 1mb of RAM.

Can I put 4 1mb simms in to get 4 mb, won’t there be a problem with the 512k RAM on the mother board being in parallel with some on the marpet boards RAM.

I’ve got no manual for this board."

Derryck Croker tells Lyndon:

"Yes, there will be problems using four MEG. The installation you already have should have one or two resistors with one end removed from the PCB and wired to the +ve end of a nearby capacitor. Do the same with the other resistor(s) in the same bank to disable the ST’s 512K RAM.

I’m hazy on the exact details, but this should be enough to give you the idea.

Peter West chimes in and tells Lyndon:

"Using small snippers or scissors cut the end nearest to the MMU chip of the following resistors for the bank(s) you wish to turn off:

	Bank 1		Bank 2	
STFM Type I	R61 and	R60	R71 and	R72
STFM Type II	R90	R91	R93	R94
STFM Type III	R61	R60	R71	R72
Mega 1 ST	R68	R70	R148	R149

Bend up the cut end of each cut resistor and attach a wire that goes to the +ve end of the nearby large capacitor."

Ric Easton asks for help with his modem:

"I have spent two happy years online with my 1040STE (4MB) until recently when my service provider changed their modems over to some digital type. I can no longer connect to them even though they say nothing should have changed in the way of settings etc my end. They did say i needed a V90 compatible modem 56K. I have tried one of these but still no connection. I suspect it may be the HSMODA06 driver I have for the modem does not drive a V90 compatible modem.

Has anyone had a similar experience or have any ideas? Are there any other modem drivers other than HSMODA06?

I would appreciate any help as it is driving me crazy having to use our (new) PC for email and newsgroups etc. Pop watch is just so good at viewing mail and cutting out the crap and long unwanted ones before downloading and I never had any problem connecting with STinG."

Steve Stupple asks Ric:

"Have you tried HS Modem v7? if may sort the problem. I don't have any problem connecting with a 28800 on my Atari's!!!! Or with ANY other ISP, I've tried, with using it on a pc!"

Dan Ackerman tells Steve and Ric:

"Well I just wanted to add this little bit of information. It's my opinion entirely and any similarity between it and reality I will leave to the reader.

1. Most ISP tech people don't know the difference between LCP and IPCP. In fact unless they have read the box of some canned piece of software, they probably don't even know the words. (I've heard europe is better than the US, so please keep that in mind as well)

2. Most experts on TCP/IP in the US are really only experts on Microsoft's software installation and setup. I've had a few rounds with a tech of somewhat national standing who makes 3 times what I do in a year. And they inevitably fall apart quickly with him not understanding basic bits of what he is supposedly a national level expert on.

3. Most PPP/SLIP is done through hardware solutions these days. You would think this would help the ISP get their act together. In truth I think it just means they felt justified to fire the few people around that did know what they were talking about (I am not now and never have been employed by an ISP)

4. The level of incompetence has reached the critical failing point that they can't help an average user with a real problem with their service. They frankly can't help as they've never been taught anything about the subject. If it's beyond setting up DialUp Networking in windows, it's beyond their education.

5. Learn some buzzwords and what they mean. Like TTL is time to live. It is entertaining if nothing else. And will ensure when you arguing with your ISP that at least one of you has some idea of the subject. I have caught local ISP's throwing out buzzwords to try and

amaze me with their knowledge. It might have worked if I didn't know what the words meant and realized that they obviously didn't.

6. Finally the solution. Look for another ISP. They are quite possibly using a misconfigured ASCEND router and your chance of getting them to fix it is little to nothing. I offered to fix a local one for free after showing them that their national consultant who charges them $1000 hour didn't know his anus from his mouth. Needless to say my lack of Microsoft Certification makes them worried. Idiots."

[Editor's Note]: My ISP recently switched to a nationwide dial-up system, and I had to reconfigure things slightly to get anything to work with it. It turns out that, while the old system used PAP, the new system uses CHAP. Although Microsoft's stock dialer detects the difference and adapts, none of the dialers I use do. When I called the ISP to inform them of the difference and recommend that they make mention of it. The customer support person, although very polite and personable, didn't have a clue as to what I was talking about. Another case in point, I guess.

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Want To Be A Millionaire 2
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   'Rampage Through Time'!
                                     'Heroes' For GBC!
                                     'Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn'!
                                     And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Midway's Arcade Progeny ''Rampage Through Time"
Launches on the PlayStation Game Console

Midway Games Inc. announced that ''Rampage Through Time" for the PlayStation game console will be available in retail outlets this week.

In this latest PlayStation installment of the popular arcade and home console series, the ''Rampage" monsters are back with more destructive fun including added locations, time periods and party-style mini-games that

feature classic gameplay.

While in hot pursuit of the evil time-traveling Doctor Scum, players get a chance to take on the role of eight one-of-a-kind monsters to engage in chaos as they demolish cities throughout time. This PlayStation version also allows for three-player simultaneous action, which gives a whole new meaning to the word ‘‘destruction."

Players must accumulate power-ups in the form of bombs and, as monsters, destroy all objects in their way. With separate building ‘‘smash rounds," mini-games and boss levels to play, ‘‘Rampage Through Time" is filled with devastatingly devilish fun.

‘‘The comical bedlam of the original ‘Rampage’ is a strong presence throughout this PlayStation release," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing for Midway. ‘‘With new plot additions and added characters, ‘Rampage Through Time’ includes more exciting gameplay than ever before."

‘‘Rampage Through Time" is being supported by a promotional giveaway that will appear in the August issue of incite Video Gaming and online at incite.com. Midway is also supporting ‘‘Rampage Through Time" with an advertising campaign that will appear in video game enthusiast and mainstream consumer publications.

‘‘Rampage Through Time" Key Features

* Party-style multi-player game that can support up to three players simultaneously
* Eight ‘‘Rampage" monsters to choose from including classic favorites: Lizzie, George and Ralph
* Sixty building ‘‘smash rounds" for players to wreak havoc
* Twenty unique settings throughout time including ancient Egypt and the old West
* Twenty mini-games featuring classic game play with the ‘‘Rampage" attitude
* Climactic conclusion with fierce final boss

3DO Ships Heroes of Might and Magic for Game Boy Color

The 3DO Company announced that the Heroes of Might and Magic game for the Game Boy Color is now available at retail outlets throughout North America and online shopping sites. The Heroes of Might and Magic game transports players to the fantasy world of Enroth where they must forge their kingdom from the ground up. Players explore treacherous lands, build powerful armies, and conquer the forces of evil in this innovative game of strategy and fantasy.

‘‘The Game Boy Color has been a phenomenal success among adults and children alike," said Trip Hawkins, chairman and CEO of The 3DO Company. ‘‘The very popular Heroes of Might and Magic game is a natural for this platform, because it appeals to such a wide range of players."

The Heroes brand, developed by New World Computing, a division of The 3DO Company, has earned high praise from leading publications, including a ‘‘Readers’ Top 50" award and a ‘‘Turn-Based Strategy Game of the Year" award from PC Gamer magazine, as well as perfect score ratings and awards from Computer Games Strategy Plus magazine and Cnet Gamecenter, among

others. The game also earned a ‘‘Top Pick" selection from Family PC magazine, and ‘‘Editor’s Choice" and ‘‘Hall of Fame" awards from Computer Gaming World magazine. The series has sold over 1.5 million units worldwide, and has spent several months at the top of the Computer Gaming World Readers’ Poll.

Infogrames Jets NGEN Racing Into Stores This Week On Sony PlayStation

Get off the road and into the air with Infogrames’ PlayStation hit, NGEN Racing. The title that begins shipping to most major retail stores this week takes players to a whole new level of fighter jet-racing action. All adrenaline junkies are invited to strap in and make a Mach 2 dash for glory!

The year is 2012, in a new kind of underground sport, the world’s most advanced fighter crafts are modified and enhanced for extreme low-level flights and are equipped with ultra sophisticated weapons. Players will be thrown into the cockpits of up to 40 real-world fighter jets to compete on 23 gigantic racing circuits built in real world places as exotic as desert canyons and arctic mountains. The more races you win, the more customizing options you get to help make your plane into the ultimate racing machine. Battle your way through the leagues to conquer the preeminent award of Supreme Champion.

‘‘The speed and handling of the jets in NGEN Racing is a fantastic experience that will thrill racing fans and newcomers alike," said David Riley, marketing director for Infogrames’ San Jose Label. ‘‘Add to that visually stunning graphics, adrenaline-pumping jet racing action and fierce multi-player competition and you have players captivated for hours on end."

Featuring two control methods and two racing modes, NGEN Racing offers the option of customizing the jets to fit the players’ skill level. Arcade mode and NGEN racing modes will allow players to choose between straight racing and jet modified racing. In NGEN racing mode pilots buy, sell and modify their jet aircrafts then compete in a series of races in order to win cash to further their racing careers.

NGEN Racing also offers intense two-player action with head-to-head races or a unique two-player feature called Powerball. The objective of Powerball is to capture a blue glowing ball found in the center of the landscape arena and to keep it as long as possible while your opponent tries to steal it. Disabled weapons and speed hindrance are the detriments to having the powerball. Using extreme flying skills is your only defense against your opponent who has his weapons fully intact to help knock the powerball out of your grasp. The player who has kept the powerball for the longest at the end of the battle wins.

Developed by Curly Monsters, NGEN Racing also features TV-style replays, a variety of offensive and defensive weapons, a precision 3D engine, and an original soundtrack from popular European DJ, Matt Darey. NGEN Racing is available at an estimated retail price of $39.99 and can be found at most major retail outlets.

Activision Takes Players on a High-Speed Ride Through Europe With the Release Of Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn for the PlayStation Game Console

Search, solve and destroy. The action-adventure genre goes high-speed when Activision, Inc. ships Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn for the PlayStation game console the week of June 19, 2000. Rated ‘‘M" (‘‘Mature") by the ESRB, the heart-pounding game will be available in retail across North America and carries a suggested retail price of $39.99.

Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn takes place on a new high-speed military train that has been hijacked as it leaves St. Petersburg bound for Paris. In this authentic military based real-time action-adventure game, players assume the role of a NATO soldier who must rescue an ambassador and his family from a group of terrorists and defuse multiple nuclear weapons before the train reaches Paris.

‘‘Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn’s multi-faceted gameplay, stunning graphics, real-world environments and life-like military missions make for an exceptional and immersive ride," said Michael Pole, executive vice president, Activision Studios. ‘‘With multiple outcomes based on the player’s choices, the game is sure to captivate gamers across the board."

Produced by Sugar and Rockets, Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn draws players into a compelling story that unfolds and changes based on players’ actions. As the train travels through 30 cities in 12 different countries, players are challenged to master new skills as they jump, roll, sneak, climb and shoot their way inside and outside more than 18 multi-level train cars. Additionally, the game features 10 military weapons, multiple puzzles, three mini-games tied to the storyline, seven different endings plus a bonus mode and over 50 minutes of cinematic cut scenes that unveil the twists and turns of the high-speed action-adventure.

’Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition’ Challenges Players to Take The ’Hot Seat’ on the Playstation Game Console

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the release of ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" for the PlayStation game console. Following the style of ABC’s most popular television phenomenon, ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" incorporates all the drama and immersive fun of the TV game show, with hundreds of mind-bending questions and all three Lifelines -- Phone-A-Friend, Ask the Audience and 50/50 -- all hosted by a virtual Regis Philbin.

‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" utilizes audio and video of Regis Philbin, including instructions on how to play the game; questions; right/wrong answers; phone-in banter; and of course, ‘‘...is that your FINAL answer?" Through a winning combination of clever writing, design and high-production values, a virtual Regis Philbin comes to life, complete with his charming wit and attitude, to host the game right in players’ homes.

‘‘We are thrilled to bring ’Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition’ to the PlayStation game console," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ‘‘With the popularity

of the television game show and Regis Philbin as the host, ’Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition’ is sure to become a huge hit among PlayStation gamers."

‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" captures the drama of the game show, beginning with the two-player Fastest Finger round. Four items are displayed out of sequence on the screen, and the first contestant to put these items in the right order in the shortest time advances to the Hot Seat. Just like the television program, participants must answer 15 progressively challenging questions correctly.

Also as on TV, players can rely on three different Lifelines for assistance: Ask the Audience, Phone-A-Friend and 50/50. Instead of polling a live studio audience for Ask the Audience, ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" uses an Internet poll conducted prior to the release of the game. When Phone-A-Friend is selected, the game ‘‘calls" one of Regis’ virtual friends. Sometimes the answers they give will be correct, sometimes incorrect. Players must use clues in the answers to figure out whether to rely on the advice or disregard it. The third Lifeline is 50/50, which narrows down the correct answers to two choices.

Unlike the television version, should players lose the game, they can always try again. With hundreds of questions available, the game provides hours of nail-biting fun. The TV-like timing, tense music and right dose of unique banter from Regis build non-stop excitement for the chance to become a virtual millionaire.

Two consumer promotions will support the release of ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" for the PlayStation game console. The first promotion, ‘‘Win A ’$1,000,000’ Sweepstakes," sponsored by Sony Computer Entertainment America, gives consumers the opportunity to win one million dollars. Consumers may participate by purchasing a specially marked copy of ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" for PlayStation or by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to: ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" Sweepstakes, Game Piece/Rule Request, 1407 Airport Road, Suite 2034, Monroe, NC 28110. Participating contestants will receive a game piece with a number printed inside, attached to the front panel of the ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" packaging. To determine if they are the winner, consumers must visit www.playstation.com, go to the ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" game page, follow the instructions to enter their game piece number and see if it matches the winning number. One grand prize winner will receive one million dollars.

The second promotion is a retail promotion, sponsored by Kmart stores nationwide. Kmart customers who purchase ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" for PlayStation will receive a calling card with ten minutes of access to an additional Lifeline to be utilized while playing the game. This Lifeline would be a direct connection to the PlayStation call center, whose agents have answers to the questions available upon request. This promotion will take place beginning July 10 through August 7, 2000. Kmart calling cards are good while supplies last.

This Second Edition title of the ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" interactive game follows the original PC-CDROM, which launched in November 1999 and became the fastest selling PC game of all time.

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates ‘‘Who Wants To Be A Millionaire: 2nd Edition" ‘‘E" for ‘‘Everyone." For more information about the ESRB visit www.esrb.org.

Ducati - Italian Style, Passion and Power Races to the Sega Dreamcast, Playstation Game Console and PC

Acclaim Entertainment announced that it is set to publish a multi-format video game based on Ducati motorcycles.

Developed by Attention To Detail (ATD), the game tentatively titled Ducati is focused on the bikes, lifestyle and great tradition of the world's premium motorcycle brand.

''Both Acclaim and ATD are in collaboration with Ducati to ensure that the gameplay and styling accurately projects the revolutionary and desirable Ducati feel," said Evan Stein, Brand Director at Acclaim Entertainment. ''Designed with the gamer in mind, the sophisticated game physics allow the player to get a feel of the different handling of Ducati's bikes throughout the classic Italian motorcycle company's fifty-year-old history."

Ducati contains two games in one: Ducati Quick Race and Ducati Life. In the Quick Race Mode, single players climb through a simple arcade-style progression and skill achievement is rewarded with faster and more desirable bikes. There are three different difficulty levels in which to race as well as eight initial tracks. The Ducati Life mode is unique in that it offers single players a realistic simulation of the entire Ducati bike range. Proof of skill rewards players with cash flow, which can be used to enter more races and purchase more desirable bikes and upgrades. Players can then tweak their hard-earned bikes until they are the ultimate racing machines. The unique thrill comes when the player takes their tuned bike and enters a challenge race against a friend - win and they get to keep both bikes; lose and it's back to the garage empty handed. The game also includes a Classic Showroom, which contains samples of Ducati bikes from the 1950's to the present; the Ducati Showroom, featuring modern Ducati bikes; and the Used Showroom, where gamers can purchase less expensive, used bikes.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. Appeals Court to Consider Microsoft Request

Microsoft won a small round in its battle against the Justice Department on Monday, when the U.S. Court of Appeals agreed to consider freezing a lower court order that forces the software giant to change its business practices, but the victory may be temporary.

In fact, the narrow procedural ruling contained something for each side and stopped far short of dealing with the lower court's order to break up the company, a remedy imposed to stop Microsoft Corp. from abusing monopoly

power.

For example, the appeals court sided with the government and rejected Microsoft’s argument that the Justice Department and 19 states really have separate case instead of a combined action. That decision helped simplify matters for the government procedurally.

‘‘This moves things along about a foot, with several miles to go," said Robert Litan, vice president and director of economic studies at The Brookings Institution. The appeals court’s action is part of a complex interplay between the government, Microsoft, the trial court, the appeals court and the Supreme Court -- where the case is ultimately expected to be decided.

Earlier this month, District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ordered stringent conduct remedies to take effect Sept. 5 for Microsoft. He also ordered a break-up of the company, but delayed action until all appeals are complete.

Among other things, the conduct remedies require Microsoft to treat major computer makers the same and permit them to customize how Microsoft’s Windows operating system appears on their screens. Microsoft also would have to permit other software applications writers the same access to the company’s code that Microsoft’s own software writers enjoy.

Microsoft asked the appeals court to freeze Jackson’s conduct remedies from taking effect, denying all allegations and telling the appeals court it holds no monopoly.

The appeals court sided with Microsoft and decided it would consider the question without waiting for Jackson. It set out a quick schedule, giving the Justice Department 10 days to reply and Microsoft another seven to comment.

‘‘Clearly, we are pleased that the Appeals Court unanimously sided with Microsoft and rejected the government’s invitation to delay this process," said Jim Cullinan, a Microsoft spokesman, from company headquarters in Redmond, Wash.

But the victory may be short-lived. The government has asked Jackson to certify the landmark antitrust case directly to the Supreme Court, under a special law for Justice Department antitrust cases.

Microsoft told Jackson late Monday he should permit the case to go through the appeals court, using arguments that seemed designed to appeal to the high court rather than to Jackson.

For example, Microsoft told Jackson in its 11-page filing he had made so many mistakes an appeals court needed to sort them out before bothering the high court.

‘‘Microsoft intends to challenge many of the court’s findings as clearly erroneous," Microsoft told Jackson of his decision.

There were so many areas in which he erred that, "Addressing those subjects alone would require review of the 13,466-page trial transcript and the 2,695 trial exhibits that comprise the record in these cases, a time-consuming exercise the Supreme Court would not likely be anxious to undertake."

Jackson has said in the past that he thinks sending the case straight to the Supreme Court is a good idea.

The appeals court said it will suspend its schedule if Jackson sends the case to the high court.

‘‘We are very pleased with the court’s ruling that it would stay further proceedings if the District Court certifies the case for direct appeal to the Supreme Court," a Justice Department spokeswoman said.

If five Supreme Court justices decide taking the direct appeal it will go back to the appeals court. At that point, under the order issued Monday, the schedule would pick up where it left off -- without counting the time in between.

‘‘This is a temporary victory for Microsoft," said the Brookings Institution’s Litan. ‘‘They got what they wanted, which is to have the circuit court hear the stay motion without waiting for Jackson to act."

But Litan said Judge Jackson ‘‘can step in and rain on Microsoft’s parade by certifying the case directly to the Supreme Court. If that happens, then the circuit court is basically in a holding pattern waiting for the Supreme Court to decide what to do."

Judge Sends Microsoft Case to High Court

The judge in the Microsoft antitrust case sent the company’s appeal directly to the Supreme Court on Tuesday, and suspended stringent business restrictions of the software giant he had ordered to take effect in September.

If the Supreme Court decides to keep the case, a resolution of the landmark trial could come as soon as next year, as the government has urged.

Alternatively, the high court could send it to the U.S. Court of Appeals to hear first, which Microsoft supports.

U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ordered the break-up of the company June 7 to prevent future antitrust violations, but suspended the split until all appeals were finished.

Jackson also ordered temporary business restrictions that were to take effect on Sept. 5.

In his ruling on Tuesday Jackson reversed himself on the conduct remedies and said they were suspended ‘‘until the appeal is decided" by the Supreme Court, or until another appeals court reinstates them.

The conduct remedies would have required Microsoft to give software developers greater access to the code behind its Windows personal computer operating system. It would also have had to treat large computer makers equally and allow them to customize how Windows appears on their screens.

‘‘The decision to certify the case for potential direct appeal to the Supreme Court was widely expected, but we’re very pleased the court has stayed the judgement pending appeal," said a Microsoft spokesman, Mark Murray.

‘‘This will allow our appeal to go forward promptly without unnecessary disruption to consumers or the high-tech industry," he said in a telephone conversation. ‘‘We look forward to presenting our appeal and getting a prompt resolution of the case."

Murray said he was confident Microsoft would win on appeal. The company has already beaten the Justice Department once in the appeals court, in 1998, getting a reversal of a Jackson decision in an earlier skirmish with the government.

The Justice Department, too, expressed satisfaction with the judge’s decision and looked to the Supreme Court as its preferred venue.

‘‘This decision affirms the Department’s position that a quick and effective remedy is necessary to resolve this significant case," the government said in a statement.

It said the decision to suspend any remedy makes the prompt resolution by the Supreme Court more urgent.

‘‘Given the District Court’s decision to stay the remedy during the appeal process, the direct appeal to the Supreme Court is of particular importance to the national interest," the statement said.

Judges may send appeals from antitrust cases brought by the government directly to the Supreme Court when they find they are ‘‘of general public importance in the administration of justice," according to the law.

‘‘The sooner a meaningful remedy is in place, the better it will be for consumers and the marketplace by providing increased innovation, more choices and better products," the Justice Department said.

Jackson ruled in his landmark decision that Microsoft violated the nation’s antitrust laws by using its monopoly power in personal computer operating systems to intimidate customers into using its products instead of those of rivals.

Microsoft, Government Agree on Supreme Court Dates

Microsoft and the government Thursday jointly proposed a timetable for written arguments to the Supreme Court on whether the nation’s highest court should hear the software giant’s antitrust appeal, bypassing the U.S. Court of Appeals.

‘‘The parties have agreed to a briefing schedule," said Seth Waxman, the Justice Department’s solicitor General, in a letter to the clerk of the high court.

Waxman, the government’s chief advocate before the Supreme Court, wrote that the parties agreed that Microsoft will file with the high court on July 26th, the government will answer on Aug. 15, and Microsoft will file its reply -- if any -- on Aug. 22.

U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson found June 7 that the company violated the nation’s antitrust laws and ordered the firm broken in two. But he has delayed the order -- including restrictions on Microsoft’s

business practices -- from taking effect until all appeals are completed.

The agreement on the schedule was in contrast to a recent barrage of competing legal briefs that preceded Jackson’s order Tuesday to certify the case directly to the Supreme Court under a law allowing such a course if the matter is ‘‘of general public importance in the administration of justice."

Microsoft will argue that the case should first be heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals, a court that has previously overturned Jackson in the company’s favor. The Justice Department and 19 states will argue that the case is of general public importance and should be heard directly by the high court.

If at least four of the nine Supreme Court justices agree to hear the case then the high court will hear it. Otherwise, the Supreme Court will send the case down to the U.S. Court of Appeals, which had already agreed to hear the company’s appeal.

AOL Customer Accounts Hacked

America Online confirmed Friday that some of their employee accounts have been compromised by hackers, and that the accounts were used to gain access to and view details of some personal user accounts.

A spokesman for AOL, the largest Internet service provider, said the company has ‘‘employed extra security measures" to solve the problem.

‘‘We are aware of these claims that a small number of employee accounts have been compromised," said spokesman Rich D’Amato, adding that the company was withholding further details of the exploit until an investigation was completed.

The break-in, first reported early Thursday morning on Observers.net, a site by former AOL volunteers, is performed by placing a malicious program on an AOL employee’s workstation. That program, referred to as a Trojan horse, opens a hole in AOL’s defenses allowing a hacker access into the company’s internal network.

Once there, the hacker can access the company’s Customer Relations Information System, which manages user accounts. CRIS is the keys to the kingdom, revealing everything from the customer’s name and address to credit card numbers used for billing. The hacker can even take control of the customer’s account by changing the password.

Police Your Passwords, Or Become A Victim

These days, it seems like you need a password to gain entry into just about everything, and for good reason. Passwords are the oldest, most mature and most flexible security tool around. Yet they’re also the most often breached, though not because of inherent conceptual or technological weaknesses. Despite years of experience, few people keep their passwords secure, and few companies enforce policies that require them to do so. Much like the lock on a front door, however, passwords always will be an attacker’s first target. As long as they remain insecure, any other

defensive measures are essentially useless.

Usually, the easiest way to get someone’s password is simply to ask for it. Penetration testing and independent studies repeatedly have shown that most employees will readily give up their passwords to impostors posing as help-desk personnel over the phone. In some cases, 90 percent of those tested fell for the trick. Surprisingly, help desks are often just as gullible, giving access to the same impostors posing as legitimate users who have forgotten their password.

The lesson here is simple: Under no circumstances should users share their passwords with anyone. IT staff, including help-desk staff, should never have access to user passwords. If a user is accidentally locked out, the old password should be reset and a new one selected or issued --and not over the phone.

Selection and maintenance of passwords is not quite as simple. The best passwords are the hardest to guess: long and random. I use 40-plus character phrases as passwords --usually obscure, but memorable, quotations. Moreover, unless users choose different passwords for each separate account, and change those passwords regularly, the potential damage from a single breach can be extreme. Such practices, unfortunately, make it almost impossible for users to remember their log-in information, which creates a strong temptation to write this data down --clearly opening themselves up to hacker-type passersby.

One answer is the password safe. I cannot sing the praises of these apps loud enough. Simple and inexpensive, they store log-in information in a secure, encrypted file, allowing system administrators to enforce very stringent rules for security while minimizing the impact on the end user. The user still must remember a single password to open the safe itself, but because it is never transmitted over a network, it is far more secure than most. A safe of some sort should be a standard part of every desktop install.

Finally, it is important to note that password policy cannot be merely outlined in a training document; it must be enforced. End users see security as a hassle, an obstacle between themselves and their computers. But left to their own devices, they inevitably will expose their passwords to attack.

New Virus Hits Networks, Could Overwhelm Servers

A computer virus that was dormant for nearly two weeks has awakened, hitting several corporate networks and sparking security experts this morning to upgrade warnings for the infection from "low" to "medium."

The so-called stages.worm virus has been found in email attachments in messages with the subject lines "Funny" and "Jokes." Like the "I Love You" and Melissa viruses, stages.worm replicates itself through IRC (Internet Relay Chat) channels and Microsoft’s Outlook Express email program.

The attachment shows up as LIFE_STAGES.TXT.

Vincent Gullotto, director of Network Associates’ Anti-Virus Response Team (AVERT), said this morning that about 50 customers reported seeing the virus, although most said they found relatively few infected emails.

"We found the virus two weeks ago and assessed its risk as low," Gullotto said. "But over the weekend we had a couple of large global corporations report the virus, and then this morning numbers started to mount."

The virus does not destroy files or otherwise damage computer systems, he added.

A notice posted on Symantec’s Web site said that the virus could potentially overwhelm email servers.

The LIFE_STAGES.TXT attachment is a Shell Script object file, according to a report on the virus posted at Network Associates’ Web site. Shell Script files carry the extension "SHS," but the extension is not normally displayed, making it easy to disguise.

Gullotto said computer users should not assume they can tell whether an attached file is safe simply by looking at the file type. He pointed to two other recent examples of disguised malicious files, Downloader and Backdoor G2, which erroneously appeared to be video files with "AVI" extensions.

The attachment includes a series of jokes about how dating changes as people get older.

Lawmakers Battle Online Casinos

In a new effort against Internet gambling, lawmakers are proposing to choke off the ability of online casinos to collect bets through the most common methods of transferring money: credit cards, checks or electronic funds transfers.

The measure opens a second front in what is proving to be a tricky battle against Internet gambling, which has proliferated into a billion-dollar industry.

Assistant Treasury Secretary Gregory Baer told the House Banking Committee on Tuesday that the proposal is an ‘‘innovative" approach to combating Internet gambling. But he cautioned that advances in electronic commerce could give the industry new methods to collect money.

‘‘Any legislation restricting how people are going to get paid in the future is going to be very difficult," Baer said. ‘‘We are seeing a revolution in payment in this country."

Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa, the committee chairman, said the bill would complement a separate measure, passed in the Senate and pending in the House, to extend to the Internet the current federal ban on gambling over the telephone.

That measure has been stalled numerous times by disputes over enforcement and exemptions. Enforcement is difficult because many companies that run virtual casinos are based outside the United States. And advocates of pari-mutuel betting on horse racing, dog racing and jai alai won exemptions in the bill, prompting the Treasury and Justice departments to oppose it.

It took little time for similar disputes to arise on the first day of hearings on Leach’s bill, which he introduced with the ranking Democrat on the banking committee, Rep. John LaFalce of New York.

Alexander Ingle, executive vice president of the New York Racing Association, said the bill as written would cripple the horse racing industry by stopping off-track betting.

And Assistant Treasury Secretary Gregory Baer took issue with the bill’s proposal to restrict U.S. funding to countries that allow a ‘‘high level" of Internet gambling. Baer said that step would interfere with efforts to reduce poverty and grow economies in foreign countries.

Baer said the bill still could work, if credit card companies can be persuaded to identify Internet gambling operators and cut off payments to them.

But Rep. Marge Roukema, R-N.J., wondered aloud, ‘‘If you don’t have enforcement, how do you have legislation?"

The popularity of online gambling, combined with the reach of the Internet into homes around the world, are challenging the ability of states to determine exactly what forms of gambling, if any, should be legal.

The River City Group, a consulting group for the online gambling industry, said in a recent report that gambling is offered by nearly 700 Internet sites operated by 200 different companies or government entities. The report projected that Internet gambling will grow from $1.1 billion in 1999 to $3 billion in 2002.

Cybersmut Law Injunction Upheld

A federal law aimed at protecting children from online pornography will probably be ruled unconstitutional, an appeals court said in upholding an injunction against the measure.

The Child Online Protection Act requires commercial Web sites to collect a credit card number or some other access code as proof of age before allowing Internet users to view online material deemed harmful to minors.

The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said Thursday the proof of age requirement places an undue economic burden on publishers, who would have to pay for a screening system and could lose users who did not want to register.

It also said the act’s definition of harmful material as that which offends ‘‘contemporary community standards" is impossible to enforce because community standards vary, and Internet publishers do not know where their users live.

’‘‘Harmful to minors’ means one thing in New York and another in a small southern community," said David Sobel, lawyer for the Electronic Privacy Information Center, one organization challenging the law. ‘‘I think this decision creates a real challenge to the advocates of Internet censorship. I don’t see a way that any censorship can survive given this decision."

The court said the law is not the least restrictive way to protect

children from harmful material, noting that parents can install blocking software on their own computers.

Senior U.S. Circuit Judge Leonard I. Garth called the law ‘‘Congress’ laudatory attempt to achieve its compelling objective of protecting minors from harmful material on the World Wide Web," but said in the court’s 34-page ruling that it will probably be ruled unconstitutional.

Other plaintiffs in the suit against the law include the American Civil Liberties Union, the online publication Salon, the Philadelphia Gay News, bookstores and sexual health publishers.

A Justice Department spokeswoman said it was too early to say whether there would be an appeal.

Garth said Congress had not adequately addressed concerns that led the Supreme Court to strike down an Internet censorship law passed in 1996.

The act currently under debate, passed in 1998, is limited to commercial sites and defines harmful material as that which would offend ‘‘contemporary community standards."

One of the bill’s sponsors, Rep. James Greenwood, R-Pa., said Thursday that if attorneys decide more legal action on the current law would be fruitless, he believes Congress will pass another version of the bill in an attempt to meet the constitutional objections.

Greenwood said he believes the intent of the bill - to keep children out of pornographic sites in the same way they are barred from adult bookstores and X-rated movie theaters - is constitutional, although there are technological difficulties in doing so.

‘‘So far, what disturbs me is that the courts are erring on the side of allowing the children in rather than making it more difficult for adults," Greenwood said.

New Windows OS Due in September

Microsoft Corp. has finished work on the successor to the popular Windows 98 home computer operating system and will officially release the product on Sept. 14.

The new software, called Windows Millennium Edition, was sent to computer makers on Monday, Microsoft said. It will be included on new computers purchased after the launch date, and consumers will be able to purchase it in stores as well.

A full-install version of the software will cost $209. People running Windows 98 or Windows 95 who wish to upgrade can purchase the software for $109.

The new operating system will include a number of new features, though fewer changes in the underlying technology than in past upgrades. Windows Me, as it is called, will feature a new Microsoft Windows Media Player, which will help customers manage digital video and music on their computers.

Microsoft has also improved Windows' maintenance, making computer error messages easier to understand and creating safeguards against users accidentally deleting critical files.

The new system also includes an upgraded version of the Internet Explorer Web browser, and will feature step-by-step instructions for linking two or more computers together into a home network.

Analysts who watch the company agreed that Windows Me was not as important an upgrade as when Microsoft introduced Windows 95.

''This is very much evolutionary, and even then there's not too much there," said Michael Gartenberg, an analyst and partner in the venture capital firm Dellet. ''You can download IE and the Media Player off the Internet for free anyway."

Gartenberg said that some of Windows Me's appeal will be ''psychological" in that computer users will upgrade simply to have the newest and best software. And, analysts noted, there are some perks to the new OS.

''For a hundred bucks, it's kind of like getting a new computer," said Rob Enderle, an analyst for the Giga Information Group. ''It's more reliable, it'll make sure you can use the latest hardware, and you'll see a performance boost."

Windows Me will be the last home version of Windows to be built using the 20-year-old Disk Operating System (DOS) technology. The successor to Windows Me, due in 2001, will be based on the more stable Windows 2000 business system, introduced Feb. 17.

Compaq's Colorful 'Back-to-School' PCs

In a major revamp of the venerable Presario line, Compaq offers PCs with changeable colors and easy upgrades.

Sounding more like a stationery store than a computer company, Compaq Computer Corp. on Wednesday unveiled "back-to-school" PCs whose colors can be changed after purchase.

Borrowing a page from Apple Computer Inc.'s iMac, Compaq said it will offer buyers a choice of up to six colors when they purchase Presario 5000 and 7000 series desktop computers.

In a press release, Compaq said the Presario 5000 starts at $649 and features Celeron and Pentium III processors and USB ports. Also included are a CD-RW drive and 40X max CD-ROM drive, along with a DVD-ROM drive on some models.

The Presario 7000, which starts at $960, adds two IEEE 1394 ports, a Sound Blaster PCI audio card, AMD Athlon processors and a 16-megabit NVidia TNT2 graphics card.

Several models are available immediately, with others to ship throughout the back-to-school season.

In other announcements, Compaq unveiled:

The Presario 1400 Series notebook, which includes a hot-swappable drive bay for exchanging floppy, CD-ROM, DVD-ROM or CD-RW drives. The system starts at $1,499.

The 1800 series, which includes a 750 MHz Pentium III processor, 30-gigabit hard drive and high-speed Internet access. The 1800 Series starts at $1,899.

A trio of monitors and the IJ600 color inkjet printer.

In addition to an array of colors, the new Presarios feature easy upgrades, access to the customizable My Presario Activity Center Web site, and a choice of Internet service providers.

The company said it was the most significant redesign of the flagship Presario line since 1996.

Buyers will be able to change the color of their PCs with a free "snap-on MyStyle Accent Color Kit," which includes a front panel, keyboard insert and speaker grills, according to Compaq.

The PC colors are Smokey Quartz, Emerald Green, Ruby Red, Amber Orange, Sapphire Blue and Amethyst Purple.

The machines owe another design debt to Apple. The Presarios feature pop-off panels that provide easy access to memory, PCI slots and the hard drive. In addition, the machines provide a "screwless" rail design that allows easy swapping of storage devices.

An e-mail waiting light on the keyboard will notify users when new mail arrives.

Microsoft Unveils New Internet Initiative

Microsoft Corp. on Thursday unveiled what it called its most ambitious project since the Windows operating system, a so-called ‘‘dot-net" strategy to integrate its software with the Internet and make it easier to swap information between computing devices.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates and other executives unveiled prototype ‘‘.Net" products such as computers that recognize voice and can answer back, a digital book and notepad that can recognize natural handwriting and connect to the Web and cell phones that let users dictate e-mail.

The .Net (dot-net) strategy ties together Microsoft’s recent work in areas such as hand-held devices, wireless computing, Internet television and digital music and books. The technology would enable users to swap information between such devices.

Gates said the first version of the dot-net technology would be rolled out next year with a more robust version following in 2002. He said current Microsoft products such as the Windows operating system and Office business software would be retooled with dot-net functions.

‘‘Next year you will see many of the services emerge, but it will be more than two years out before all the services will be out there," Gates said.

Gates likened the initiative to the effort put behind the Windows operating system that has been a cornerstone of the company's sprawling software empire.

''There is a very strong analogy here between what we are doing now and what we did with Windows," he said at a press briefing at Microsoft's headquarters in Redmond.

He said the ''dotnet" strategy was much more important than its 1995 Internet strategy announcement that led to the development of its Web browser.

''What we are talking about today is far more ambitious. It is a new platform. It will affect every piece of code that gets written. There is not a Microsoft product that isn't touched," Gates said. ''Our entire strategy is defined around this platform."

The strategy is based around the so-called XML (extensible markup language) technology that is rapidly becoming a standard for exchanging data between different computers and networks.

''The impact of the Internet has been spectacular to date, but the pace of innovation will accelerate over the next five years," Gates said in a statement. ''Our goal is to move beyond today's world of stand-alone Web sites to an Internet of interchangeable components where devices and services can be assembled into cohesive, user-driven experiences."

The sweeping plan aims to fuse Microsoft's software with the Internet, even as it battles the U.S. government's antitrust suit stemming from its earlier attempt to do just that.

The new strategy is bound to come under scrutiny from analysts, lawyers and judges seeking evidence that Microsoft is still behaving in ways that landed it in legal trouble.

A federal judge has ordered Microsoft split in two to ensure it doesn't further violate antitrust law. The judge found Microsoft used its monopoly in the Windows operating system to harm rivals by bundling the browser into Windows. But he has stayed the breakup and separate restrictions on its business until the end of the appeals process.

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